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ABSTRACT

To examine the representation of women in newspaper business sections, a study conducted content analyses of 30 business section front pages in "The Columbus Dispatch" in Ohio (weekly circulation about 260,000 and Sunday circulation 350,000) and "The (Louisville) Courier-Journal" in Kentucky (weekly circulation about 233,000 and Sunday circulation 325,000) from June 23, 1987 to July 22, 1987. Each page was coded for: number of stories and photos; number of stories about women (with a woman or women's issue as the main topic); stories quoting women as expert sources or spokespersons; stories with a female byline; and number of photos picturing at least one woman (not including "mug shots" of columnists that often accompany columns). Stories were also coded for the same characteristics as they applied to males. Analysis revealed that of 180 stories coded in "The Dispatch," women were the main subject of one story and four "Business Briefs," were quoted in 11 stories and one brief, had 10 bylines, and were featured in nine photos. In contrast, men were the main subject of 31 stories and 10 briefs, were quoted in 89 stories and eight briefs, had 35 bylines, and were depicted in 35 photos. Of the 116 stories coded in "The Courier-Journal," women were the subject of six stories and four briefs, were quoted in six stories and one brief, had 35 bylines, and shown in six photos. Men were the subject of 29 stories and 22 briefs, were quoted in 59 stories and 12 briefs, had 42 bylines, and depicted in 25 photos. (A summary of the coded stories is appended.) (MM)

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Gender Representation in Newspaper Business Sections

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Introduction

The focus of much research on the mass media has been on the treatment of women on newspaper pages and the possible effect their portrayal has on readers. Much of that research has centered on beliefs or feelings of women reporters and editors and on the format and recent changes in what have traditionally been known as the "women's pages" of newspapers.

But changes in American society affect more than just the numbers and feelings of female editorial employees of newspapers and sections geared toward those women. Dramatic increases throughout the last decade or so in the number of women entering the workforce and the number of women in managerial positions would seem to have an impact on the way women are portrayed in what once was a male domain -- the business section. This study is a content analysis of 30 business section fronts taken from the daily newspapers The Columbus Dispatch in Ohio and The (Louisville) Courier-Journal in Kentucky. The analysis focuses on the sections' treatment of women both as subjects and reporters of stories.

The business sections of most newspapers have, until the last several years, been designed for men, a fact that is illustrated even in the advertisements found on those pages. Such "male" products as tires, automobiles, tools and the like dominated the business page. As a result of this, much research conducted about the treatment of women in newspapers has centered on what were called the "women's" sections; those sections featuring bridal and engagement announcements, household hint

columns and light feature stories. Again, these pages were characterized by advertisements for items such as clothing, cosmetics and drug products.

Many researchers have found that treatment of women and women's issues in newspapers has historically been confined to these "women's" sections. Even with the rapid momentum of the women's meovement, newspapers still treat women as oddities, or as appendages of men (Tuchman, 1978, pp. 27-29;). It is not difficult to determine the roots of these beliefs. H. L. Molotch (Tuchman, 1978, p. 180) writes that the news business is controlled by men. " The editors, publishers and wire service executives are men..." Furthermore, he claims, why would men want to print information that would "encourage" women to abandon their traditional roles?

Because this study centers on a content analysis, it would be useful to briefly look at content analyses done on similar subjects. W. James Potter examined the proportion of front page stories in five elite newspapers that featured male and female subjects (Potter, 1985, pp. 636-640). Of 2,224 stories, he found that females were the main character of only 162 stories, or 7.3 percent of the total; males were prominent in 1,371, or 61.6 percent of the total, while both genders were featured in 72, or 3.2 percent of the stories. The researcher concluded that the results "indicate that females are very much under-represented as main characters in front-page news stories."

Molotch has seen this pattern repeated. In a content analysis of the front news section of one edition of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in 1975, he found that of 14 stories printed

in the first three news pages, 12 centered around the actions of men. Similar results were seen in a study of the San Francisco Chronicle. (Molotch, p. 181) Molotch writes: "There is no affirmative action in the content of the news print media. When women do appear, it is from a man's perspective of what is interesting; women as sex objects, as quasi-promiscuous, women who undress, who are out for a man only for his money..."

Studies of the content of news photographs and of bylines by gender yielded similar results. Roy E. Blackwood did a content analysis of subjects of news photos in a sample of two elite newspapers to learn that men in the photos outnumbered women by as much as 4 to 1. Men dominated news, business and sports sections, and their numbers were about roughly equal in "lifestyle" sections. (Blackwood, 1983 p. 711)

A 1972 study of three months of New York Times and Washington Post editions found that 94 percent of the front-page stories were written by men and 94 percent of columns on the editorial page were written by men. The study also noted that women were given "little" coverage on the business pages. (Butler and Paisley, p. 116) Finally, when researching news about women on the United Press International Wire, Barbara Luebke did a content analysis of 497 UPI stories published in eight newspapers during a week. Eight-two, or 16.5 percent, of those stories had a woman as central character, and most of those stories featuring women were "soft news" stories. (Luebke, 1982, p. 331)

This study was done with the expectation that women, while perhaps not dominating the business section, would play a

prominent role, either as subjects or writers. After all, since the 1970s, when many previous content analyses were done, the role of women in the workforce has grown considerably. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of women in the workforce nationally more than doubled from 1960 to 1985. In 1960, of 61.6 million women eligible to work (those 18 and above who were not in school, in the armed forces, in jail or deemed physically unable), 23.2 million worked. In 1985, of 93.7 million women eligible to work, 51 million worked.

Furthermore, women appear to be working more in managerial and executive capacities. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show that 43 percent of the 25.6 million workers nationwide in "managerial" positions are women.

With this increase of women in the workforce came an increase of publications geared toward working women. Such publications as Working Woman and Saavy magazines focus on these women and include regular columns about issues affecting them.

In addition, many business sections of large newspapers have expanded editorial staffs over the past few years, perhaps to reflect a growing interest of all people -- not just males -- in business. A study by J.T.W. Hubbard noted that editorial staffing on business news desks of 100,000-to-200,000 circulation daily newspapers grew by 113 percent from 1975 to 1985. That number increased by 184 percent on newspapers with a daily circulation of between 200,000 and 350,000 circulation. The number grew by

between 16 and 228 percent on all dailies, depending on size. The reearcher quoted a nationally syndicated financial columnist: "If the economy is working well for a broad mass of individuals, then there will be a natural increase in (the demand) for information about business conditions and the economy in general." (Hubbard, 1987, pp. 171-177)

This study was also done with the expectation of determining in part how and if coverage of and by women on the business pages has changed along with society. If women and men are indeed potrayed equally on these pages, is it because of the increase of women in managerial positions in companies and on the newspapers that cover them? If their portrayal is not equal, is it perhaps because of a patriarchical dominance in society and in the management of the newspapers? And if this patriarchical dominance in exists in society, is it so strong that even women in top editorial positions (i.e., as business editors or writers) absorb this dominance viewpoint?

Another possibility is that even when women serve as business editors (as one did in one of the newspapers in this study), perhaps men dominate as news sources and there is little women editors or reporters can do to "cover" women.

It was expected that this study would indicate the answers to some of these questions. Clearly, past research, such as that done by Molotch, has indicated that males dominate both management and content of newspapers. But much as changed in the last several decades.

METHODOLOGY

The Dispatch, a daily with a circulation of about 260,000 during the week and 350,000 on Sunday, runs a separate business section seven days a week. This includes a Sunday section front that often features one large story on the cover, with several columns and feature stories inside the section. As of July 1987, the business staff consisted of nine people, including five women. The women held the following jobs: one general business reporter, a homes/garden editor, two copy editors and a personal-finance reporter (It should be noted that the personal-finance reporter heads a separate weekly section from the business section that was not included in the study). Men held two general business reporting positions, a copy editing position, and a man was the section editor.

The Courier-Journal has a circulation of about 233,000 during the week and 325,000 on Sundays. It, too, runs a separate business section seven days a week, including a Sunday section featuring one or two main stories. As of July 1987, its staff consisted of five male reporters, one male copy editor and one male assistant business editor. The men report on labor, technology, utilities, personal finance and small business and real estate. Women held three reporting positions and the editorshop of the section. The females report on farming, the economy and banking, retailing and the fast-food industry.

In this study, the front page of each business section from June 23, 1987 to July 22, 1987 was coded. Each page was coded for: number of stories and photos on the page; number of stories

about women (with a women or women's issue as the main topic of the story); stories quoting women as expert sources or spokespersons; stories by women (with a female byline); and number of photos picturing at least one women (not including the "mug shots" of columnists that often accompany columns). Stories were also coded for the same characteristics as they applied to males.

Several additional aspects of the research should be noted. First, the coding was done by story and not source or subject. That is, if more than one man is quoted in a story, it was recorded only once to indicate that this is a story that quotes at least one man (or woman, as the case may be). In addition, names were used to record gender. If initials or gender-neutral names appeared, ("T.J. Jones said," or "Pat Smith said") they were not recorded because it was impossible to determine gender. The only exception to this would be a second reference to the person with a personal pronoun "he" or "she."

Finally, both newspapers run five days a week a Business Briefs column that includes five or six one- to two-inch items. If an item coded appeared in Briefs, it was specially noted that it was a Briefs item and not a full story.

RESULTS

The results of the content analysis were surprising. Of 180 stories coded in The Dispatch, women were the main subject of only one story and four Business Briefs. Eleven stories and one Brief quoted women as experts or sources. Ten stories had female bylines and nine photos pictured at least one woman. Men, on the other hand, were the main subject of 31 stories and ten briefs;

they were quoted in 89 stories and eight briefs; were listed as the writer of 35 stories; and 35 photos depicted men.

In The Courier-Journal, 116 stories were coded. Women were the subject of six of these stories and were the subjects of four Business Briefs. Six stories and one Brief quoted women as experts, while 35 stories carried female bylines. Six photos depicted women.

Men were the subject of 29 stories and 22 Briefs; fifty-nine stories and 12 briefs quoted men as "experts." Men were the authors of 42 stories and 25 photos depicted men.

It is also interesting to note the actual treatment of women when they were mentioned in the stories. In The Dispatch, for instance, even the one story that focused on a woman was not truly a story "about" her, but instead was a story about how the expansion of a section of town would affect its residents -- including this woman. Similarly, many of the Business Briefs centered on topics traditionally female. For example, one item quoted Tammy Bakker as an expert on discount shopping. Another featured a photo and brief explanation about how the Breck shampoo girl is now the Breck woman.

More serious topics dealt with the results of sex discrimination lawsuits against companies, while others listed the cities deemed the best and worst for working women.

The photos for the most part depicted women in stereotypical or useless roles. To illustrate a story about the introduction of ice cream to a fast-food chain, two women were shown eating ice cream at one of the restaurants; in another photo, a man and a

woman in business dress were viewing the start of construction at a downtown site, and in another a woman worker watched as a man lifted cement blocks at a warehouse. Other photos were "canned" shots, probably sent out by companies to illustrate a product. In one, a female inspector surrounded by hundreds of reading glasses is shown "inspecting" those glasses; in another, a kitchen worker amid hundreds of tiny hamburgers is shown packing frozen hamburgers.

In the sample of articles researched, no women quoted as "experts" are shown, no women economists or government officials are shown, no women are depicted at annual meetings as officers, and no women chief executives are shown. These seem to be the most common roles played by men in the photos.

CONCLUSION

The question that arises as a result of the content analysis is why women, who are so dominant in the nation's workforce, received such little attention in the business sections of the newspapers studied. At first one might surmise that the circulation areas of the two newspapers simply do not include many working women, so their ranks are not given the attention they might earn in other newspapers. But this is not true, according to state agencies in Ohio and Kentucky. Of about 518,000 women living in the Columbus metropolitan area, 320,000 are part of the labor force. (These figures are effective as of August 1987) In Jefferson County, of which Louisville is a part, 143,570 of the 322,493 in the workforce are women.

The differences should be noted between a newspaper

whose business section is edited by a man (Dispatch) and one whose business section is headed by a woman. (Courier-Journal) The only noticeable difference in gender representation between the two newspapers is in the number of male and female bylines. In the Courier-Journal, 35 of the stories studied were written by women, while men wrote 42, only slightly more. On the Dispatch, however, men wrote 35 of the stories while women wrote 10. (It should also be noted that more females than males report for the Dispatch, while the opposite is true of the Courier-Journal.)

This could indicate that, indeed, the presence of the female editor may have influenced the increase in female bylines. If this is true, it would indicate that coverage that ignores women comes from a patriarchical dominance. That is, once a female holds a position of power, the portrayal of females on the pages increases.

Of course, even if this is true, it does not fully explain why -- even with a female editor -- women were underrepresented in the areas of subject of stories and story source. This could show that even with a female editor, sources who dominate are male, and reporters -- male or female -- have little choice in in covering them. In other words, if men serve as spokespersons for businesses or government, it will be men who are covered in the newspapers, regardless of the gender of editors and reporters.

Further research into sources of stories may help explain why women rarely appear in the business section. This research could ask if the men who head some business organizations believe men and women are equally qualified to talk to the media and to be

quoted in newspapers. Perhaps business owners and top government officials assume the readership of the business section is is made up mostly of men who consciously or unconsciously do not think women have credibility when quoted, or are not competent when it comes to statistics, economics or the running of a company.

Another explanation may be that ignoring women is simply part of the structure of business coverage, and women who are in top editorial positions absorb this dominance viewpoint. Future research might also deal with the occupations or titles of women who are quoted or written about in the business sections of newspapers. Such a study would offer more information about the extent to which the business sections reflect reality.

It is clear that more studies about treatment of women in the business section are needed, using newspapers in different markets and perhaps magazines. The results of this study indicate that newspaper readers should ask themselves what the "solution" is to getting women into the business sections. Obviously, editors and reporters should be aware that while women make up a substantial portion of the workforce, they are not represented adequately on the business pages. Perhaps readership studies could be done to show the number of women who <u>do</u> regularly read the business pages.

SUMMARY OF STORIES CODED

	DISPATCH		COURIER-JOURNAL	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Full stories coded	180		116	
Story subject	1	31	6	29
"Brief" subject	4	10	4	22
Story source	11	89	6	59
Byline	10	35	35	42
Photo subject	9	35	6	25
Business reporters/ copy editors on staff	5	3	3	6
Business section editor	--	1	1	--
Business asst. editor	--	--	--	1

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